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TANZANIA

SUCCESS STORY

Rallying Against Stigma

Citizens march to promote tolerance for people with HIV



Photo: USAID

In Tanga, Tanzania, 500 people marched against stigma on people with HIV.

With 7 percent of the population infected with HIV, many Tanzanians are familiar with the anguish of stigma.

A stigma sears the soul. Whether from fear or from ignorance, many humans stigmatize one another at work, at home, among friends, at school. Especially for those battling HIV/AIDS, stigma is destructive, covert and difficult to measure, treat or eliminate. And with 7 percent of the population infected with HIV, many Tanzanians are familiar with the anguish of stigma.

Despite these challenges, an especially exuberant effort was made Easter weekend in Tanga, a Tanzanian coastal city, when 500 people marched against stigma. One marcher explained, "Christians all over the world during this time of year reflect on the resurrection of Jesus and how this in turn set people free from sins and other bondages, including those resulting from stigma."

Supported by USAID in cooperation with the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the

march pulsated with trumpets, songs and people exclaiming messages of hope, love and equal rights. Carrying posters and dressed in white t-shirts adorned with anti-stigma slogans, the marchers rallied forward, proclaiming, "Stigma Kills!"; "Human Rights is Everyone's Right!"; and "No to Stigma!"

During the event, members of the Anglican Church presented a skit about stigma's impact. Actors carried the coffin of a man who succumbed to HIV/AIDS to a burial ground. The man's widow, who is HIV positive, is chased from her home and goes to live with her brother and sister-in-law, but they, fearing HIV, scorn her and deny her the respect, care and love she needs. This march sought to raise awareness for situations like these, cultivate tolerance and celebrate humanity at its best.

Telling Our Story

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